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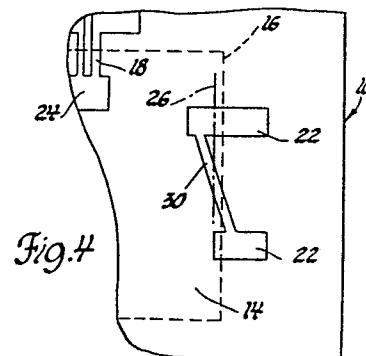
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54 Pressure sensing device.

57 A diaphragm 14 is formed in a silicon chip 10 by etching a rectangular cavity in one side thereof and piezoresistive resistors 18, 30 are formed in the other surface of the chip to sense stress changes on the diaphragm 14 due to pressure changes. At least one resistor 30 is placed along an edge 16 of the diaphragm where a sharp stress ridge 26 occurs. To avoid the problem of inaccurate placement of the resistor 30 relative to the ridge 26, the resistor is slanted with respect to the stress ridge at a small angle of 10° to 20°. This makes the resistor placement and cavity alignment much less critical thereby assuring greater uniformity of response from one device to another at the expense of signal size for a given pressure change on the device.



PRESSURE SENSING DEVICE

This invention relates to semiconductor pressure sensing devices and more particularly to such devices having a pressure responsive diaphragm with piezo-
5 resistive resistors thereon for sensing pressure induced strain in the diaphragm.

It is well known to fabricate a pressure sensing device by etching a cavity in one side of a silicon chip to form a diaphragm and then form on the
10 diaphragm surface several strain sensing resistors for connection into a strain measuring bridge. Ideally at least one resistor lies along a high strain peak or ridge which runs parallel to the edge of the diaphragm and very close to the edge. A resistor thus placed takes
15 maximum advantage of the strain pattern on the diaphragm to obtain maximum signal change for a given pressure change. The peak of the strain pattern is so sharp, however, that alignment of the resistor placement with respect to the cavity edge is critical. That is, if the
20 resistor is placed a relatively short distance from the strain peak, it can lie in a relatively low strain region. Thus, small variances from one pressure sensor to another result in unacceptably large variances in resistor response to pressure. Thus, a low yield of commercially-
25 acceptable pressure sensors is the consequence of poor uniformity of response. It is desired, however, to achieve a high yield of pressure sensors so that they can be manufactured economically in high volumes.

It is, therefore, an object of this invention
30 to provide a semiconductor pressure sensing device having a resistor configuration which takes advantage of the high strain ridge adjacent the diaphragm edge and yet does not have a critical placement.

It is another object of the invention to
35 provide pressure sensing structure which is conducive

to more uniform response and thus higher yields during production than is obtained with prior art devices.

This invention is carried out by providing a semiconductor chip containing a cavity defining a diaphragm such that a high strain ridge occurs along an edge of the diaphragm, with a plurality of strain sensing resistors on the diaphragm, at least one of the resistors being elongated and slanted across the high stress ridge at a small angle to the ridge so that if there are small variations in resistor placement relative to the ridge, the resistor still will cross the ridge and only minor variations in resistor response to diaphragm strain will result.

The above and other advantages will be made more apparent from the following specification taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts and wherein:

Figure 1 is a top view of a pressure sensing semiconductor chip with resistor placement according to the prior art.

Figure 2 is a cross sectional view of the pressure sensor of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a curve illustrating the pattern of pressure induced strain along the surface of the semiconductor pressure sensor.

Figure 4 is a plan view of a portion of a pressure sensing device with resistor configuration according to the invention, and

Figure 5 is a diagram illustrating the geometrical relationships within the semiconductor pressure sensing device according to the invention.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a semiconductor pressure sensing device according to the prior art which comprises a silicon chip 10 having a cavity 12 etched therein on one side to form a diaphragm 14 of about 1 mil

(0.0254 mm) thickness so that it readily responds to changes in differential pressure applied across the diaphragm. The edge 16 of the diaphragm is generally rectangular in shape and encompasses an area of typically 30 or 40 mils
5 (0.762 - 1.016 mm) on each side. According to the usual practice, a pair of resistors 18 extend in a direction generally towards the center of the diaphragm to measure the diaphragm strain in the radial direction and a second pair of resistors 20 extend parallel to the diaphragm
10 edge to measure the strain in the so-called tangential direction. The resistors comprise thin elongated strips about 1 mil (0.0254 mm) wide and sufficient length, say 10 to 15 mils (0.254 - 0.381 mm), to provide a desired resistance and are connected to contact areas 22 at either
15 end which have at least a portion lying beyond the diaphragm edge 16. The resistors 18 are each formed in two parallel segments connected by contact areas 24 on the diaphragm. The resistors and contact areas together comprise island-like regions of one conductivity type in
20 a silicon surface of the opposite conductivity type formed by ion implantation or diffusion.

Figure 3 diagrammatically illustrates the strain measured at various points along the sensor chip beginning at a point outside the diaphragm about 9 mils
25 (0.2286 mm) from the edge and then proceeding toward the diaphragm center. That is, the diaphragm edge 16 occurs at 9 mils (0.2286 mm) on the diaphragm. Thus, it is seen that a sharp strain peak occurs just inside the diaphragm edge about 1 mil (0.0254 mm) from the edge. The peak 26
30 actually forms a ridge since it extends along the diaphragm edge and parallel thereto as shown by a broken line 26 in Figure 1. Ideally the resistor 20 extends along the high strain ridge 26 in order to obtain a maximum signal response for any change in pressure. The accuracy of placement of
35 the resistor 20 right on the ridge 26 depends not only on the accuracy of registration of various masks used in

resistor formation and in the cavity etching step but also in the control of the etching. The actual size of the cavity 12 and thus the position of the edges 16 can vary somewhat according to how well the etching is controlled.

5 Thus, the distance of the resistor 20 from the edge 16 may vary. As can be seen from the curve of Figure 3, if the resistor placement misses the strain ridge 26 by a small amount, say 1 mil (0.025 mm), then the resistor sensitivity to diaphragm pressure will be dramatically

10 reduced and may very well be unacceptable, particularly where it is desired to fabricate a large number of sensors having somewhat uniform response characteristics.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the criticality of resistor placement is very much lessened by slanting

15 the resistor 30 at a small angle with respect to the diaphragm edge 16 and therefore to the strain ridge 26. This allows for some variation in resistor placement with respect to the edge 16 by keeping at least a portion of the resistor 30 in the high strain zone. Since some of

20 the resistor will be in relatively low strain regions of the curve of Figure 3, the overall signal change for a given pressure change will be less than the ideal case of Figure 1. However, the uniformity of signal change from one sensor to another will be much greater so that

25 the overall yield of the sensor fabrication process will be greater. The angle between the resistor 30 and the strain ridge 26 should be as small as is practical in order to maximize the signal change and the particular angle depends upon the accuracy with which the etching

30 and other geometry controlling steps can be controlled. The geometrical relationships are exemplified in Figure 5 where the nominal cavity edge 16 determines the position of the nominal strain ridge 26 relative to the fixed resistor 30 which is centered on the nominal ridge 26

35 and is positioned at an angle θ thereto. Due to manufacturing tolerances, the actual cavity edge and strain

ridge position will vary from the nominal position by a distance of plus or minus "a". The lines 26' and 26'' spaced a distance "a" on either side of the nominal strain ridge 26 indicate the acceptable limits to ridge position from sensor to sensor to define a tolerance band. The ends "b" and "c" of a line defining the longitudinal resistor axis of the slanted resistor 30 are positioned just outside the strain ridge limits 26' and 26'' so that wherever the strain ridge occurs within those limits, the resistor 30 will traverse the tolerance band including the strain ridge 26. The actual size of the angle θ depends upon the length of the resistor 30 and the production tolerance "a" which determines the position of the resistor 30 relative to the strain ridge 26. Thus, for a given tolerance "a", the angle θ will be smaller for longer resistors 30 and it will be larger for shorter resistors 30. By keeping the tolerance "a" as small as possible, the angle θ is also kept small to optimize the resistor response to strain. Where the tolerance "a" is 1.5 mils (0.0381 mm) and the resistor 30 length is 10.4 mils (0.2642 mm) or 14.5 mils (0.3683 mm), for example, the angle θ is about 17° or 12° respectively. Depending on the tolerance afforded by the fabrication process and the design length of the resistor, the angle θ may, as a practical matter fall within the range of 10° to 20° . Even a small angle θ may effect a significant increase in yield, say a 10% improvement. Since the actual strain ridge 26 varies in its position relative to the resistor 30 and the strain curve is unsymmetrical, the resistor response to strain will also vary but by an amount which is small compared to the corresponding variations occurring in the prior art configuration of Figure 1. That is, the slanted resistor, since it always covers the strain ridge 26 as well as lower strain values, provides a relatively uniform response to strain within acceptable manufacturing tolerances even though the signal

size is less than that of the resistor 20 of the Figure 1 configuration.

It will thus be seen that according to the present invention a semiconductor pressure sensing
5 device is provided which has a greater ease of manufacturing to produce sensors sufficiently uniform in response to pressure during manufacture thereof, so as to provide a high yield of commercially-acceptable sensors.

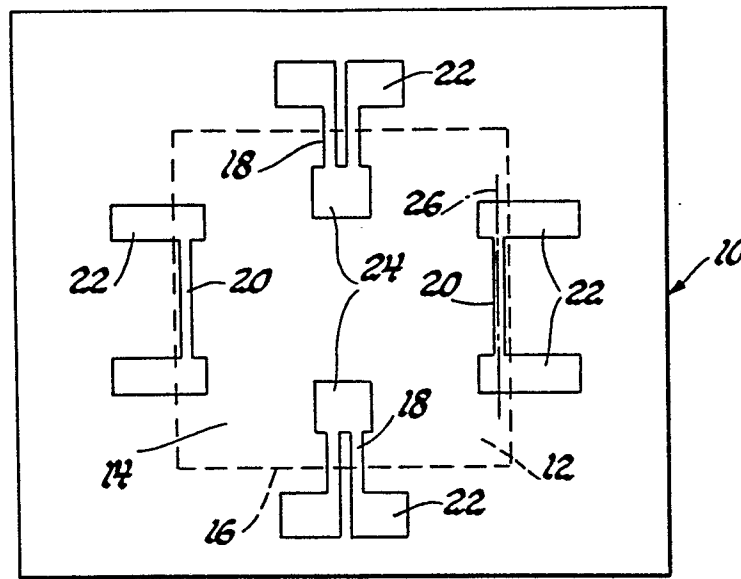
Claims: .

1. A pressure sensing device comprising a semiconductor chip (10) containing a cavity (12) defining a diaphragm (14) subject to deflection in response to pressure, the diaphragm, upon deflection, having an elongated high strain ridge (26) adjacent and parallel to a diaphragm edge (16), and
5 a plurality of piezoresistive resistors (18, 30) in the chip (10) for sensing strain in the diaphragm (14), at least one of said resistors (30) being used for measuring the strain in the strain ridge parallel to the diaphragm edge, characterised in that said one resistor (30) is elongated and slanted across the high strain ridge (26) with the longitudinal resistor
10 axis (bc) thereof disposed at an angle large enough to significantly increase yields during manufacture thereof compared to resistors parallel to the strain ridge and small enough to have good resistor response to diaphragm strain, so that small variations in resistor placement
15 relative to the strain ridge result in only minor variations in resistor response to diaphragm strain.
2. A pressure sensing device according to claim 1, characterised in that the longitudinal resistor axis (bc) of said one resistor (30) is disposed at an angle
20 in the approximate range of 10° to 20° with respect to said high strain ridge (26).

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PRIOR ART

Fig. 1



PRIOR ART

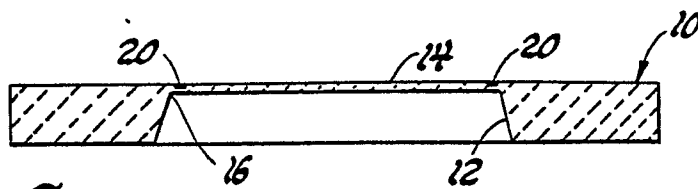


Fig. 2

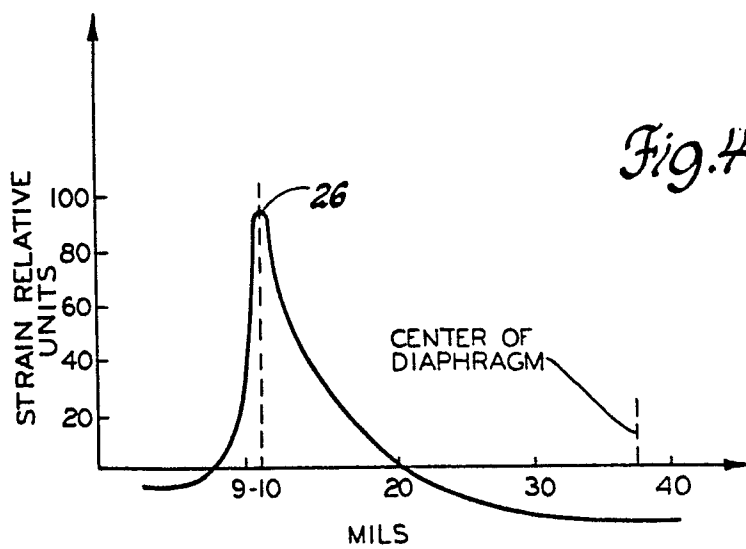


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

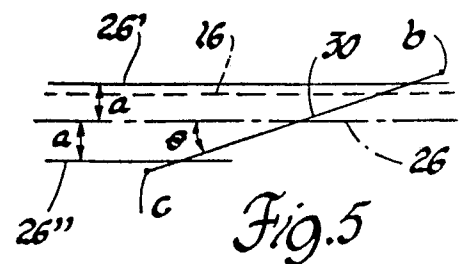
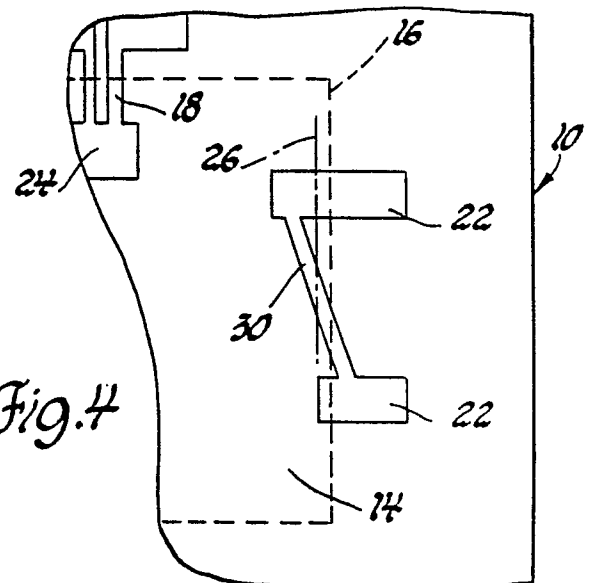


Fig. 5



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0059539

Application number

EP 82 30 0600

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 3)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
Y	MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES, volume 23, no. 5, May 1980 NEW YORK (US) V.I. VAGANOV et al. "Integral silicon pressure transducer with trimming resistors on the crystal" pages 405 to 408 * page 405, page 406, lines 1-3; figure 1 * --	1,2	G 01 L 9/06
Y	<u>US - A - 3 505 874</u> (Y. KATO et al) * abstract; column 1, lines 49 to 72; column 2, lines 1 to 5; column 4, lines 33 to 75; column 5, lines 1 to 12; figures 4 to 7 * --	1,2	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl. 3) G 01 L H 01 L
A	<u>US - A - 4 133 100</u> (K.E. MYHRE) * abstract; column 3, lines 39 to 43 and 56 to 68; column 4, lines 1 to 4; figures 7 to 13 * -----	1	CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons
☒ The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			&: member of the same patent family, corresponding document
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague		01-06-1982	VAN ASSCHE